

Prudentia Christiana

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L E T T E R

FROM A

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TO THE

BISHOP OF LONDON.

L O N D O N.

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(Price One-Shilling.)



A

LETTER, &c.

MY LORD,

I DO not address your Lordship, in this Epistle, by way of Instruction; for the Good need none; but, in Order to excite Curiosity, that it may be read. Besides, my Lord, you are the Bishop of London, and undoubtedly not only anxious for the Welfare of every Individual within your Jurisdiction, but of all Mankind. The People, my Lord, are sick of a spiritual Disorder, and stand in great Need of a skilful Physician; such as I look upon your Lordship to be. In all Cases, where Remedies ought to be applied, the first Thing necessary is to find out the Cause from whence the Malady proceeds; for unless that be properly rooted out, the Distemper will not cease. The dreadful Calamities and Distresses which the honest, industrious Part of this Nation labours under, on Account of the Dearness of Provisions, and every other Necessary of Life, claim the Attention of all good Men; and I dare venture to say, your Lordship has felt some Concern on the Occasion; especially,

ally, as the Souls of the People are in great Danger of being destroyed, as well as their Bodies. Hunger is sharp; Want is pressing; Nature craves Support; and if it cannot be supported one Way, it must be supported some Way or other. It is impossible for a Woman now, my Lord, to keep a Habitation over her Head, manage the Affairs of that Habitation; and supply herself with Necessaries of Life, by the Work of her own Hands. And, therefore, Thousands turn Prostitutes for Bread; others, of a more robust Nature, rob and steal: So that for one who went to the Plantations, or the Gallows a few Years ago, there are Numbers now. Great Pains are taken to make our Streets look magnificent to the Eye, whilst the Hearts of the Inhabitants are either stained with Vice, or oppressed with Sorrow. The Basis on which the Happiness of our Constitution was once fixed, is now gone; and England, which was even in my Memory the Envy of all Nations, is now the Seat of Guilt and Woe.

Many Causes are assigned for these Evils; though I fear the true Cause, my Lord, is not as yet known. Some impute it to the Avarice, or Neglect of the Governors; whilst I have great Reason to believe they have the least Share in it; and, if I am not much deceived, there is a secret Cause at Bottom,
of

of a more dark and dangerous Nature: A Cause which has not as yet been assigned; and which (if not properly removed) must, in a few Years Time, sink this Nation in sure Destruction. This, my Lord, is a most barbarous Opinion, instilled into the Hearts of all Degrees of People, by a Set of designing Villains, who teach them to believe that Acts of Inhumanity and Injustice are not criminal. And though it is falsely asserted, that none embrace this Doctrine but the lower Sort; I positively affirm, that it has crept in amongst all Degrees of People throughout his Majesty's Dominions; even the most opulent Dealers, as well as those of higher and lower Stations; and the more Ground it gains, the harder still our Misfortunes press upon us; which may easily be perceived.

It may not be amiss to inform your Lordship, from whence this barbarous, this detestable Doctrine first took its Rise amongst us.

About thirty Years ago, a young Gentleman, who had studied Divinity in one of our Universities, happening to be more of the Thing he professed to be, than some of his Neighbours; took it into his Head to believe that it was his Duty to answer the End for which he was created, and do as much Good as he could in the World. In order thereto, he set himself apart to preach the Gospel; and delivered the Truth with so great an
Appear-

Appearance of honest Sincerity, that it reached the Hearts of the People; and Numbers thronged from all Quarters to hear him; insomuch the Churches in which he preached were greatly damaged; so that it was not thought convenient he should continue to preach in the Churches. He then betook him to the open Fields, and drew many after him; Persons of all Ranks, and all Stations, admired and embraced his Doctrine; and, in short, he engaged the Attention of the whole Nation.

Another Gentleman, who had also studied at the University, finding the Success the Youth had gained, began to envy him; and as, in all Probability, he had more of Avarice and Design in his Disposition, than true Piety, he could not help feeling some Grudgings, concerning the Profits he judged might be likely to arise from so successful an Undertaking. He looked upon the Trade to be an excellent good one; by far more beneficial than a petty Curacy, and resolved to take it up. But the Point in Question was, how to supplant the youthful Hero, and get all to himself. Teaching the same Doctrine, he knew was not the Thing. The Original would always be more regarded than the Copy; and, consequently, better rewarded. He therefore determined to act upon different Principles, and set up a Doctrine of his own,

own, in Opposition to the other ; and such as he judged would be more agreeable to the Minds of the People. The Gentleman who first set out (I hope he has not changed his Principles to comply with the Taste of the Times) preached the Doctrine of Christ ; and gave his Hearers to understand, that no unclean Thing could enter into Heaven : That Sin must be put off, and they must become pure and perfect, before they could partake of the Purities and spotless Joys of the Kingdom of God. This, my Lord, was sound Doctrine, and truly necessary to Salvation. Now, the other Gentleman, who (I fear) did not care Two-pence whether his Doctrine was sound or unsound, so it answered his End ; formed his Plan, as I said before, upon different Principles ; set up his Doctrine in Opposition to this ; and gave his Hearers to understand, that there was no Occasion for their putting off their Sins : That sinful corrupt Souls would go to Heaven : That good Works were no Way necessary to Salvation : That human Beings could not do any Thing that was good ; and that to attempt it, was not only fruitless, but presumptuous and criminal. That the greater the Sinner, the more acceptable to God ; and that they had Nothing to do but to believe that the Supreme Being was unjust ; or, what was just the same Thing, that the
blessed

bleſſed ſpotleſs Jeſus, who could not know Sin, came down from Heaven to make them a Preſent of his Righteouſneſs, and take their Sins upon himſelf; after which they might act as they pleaſed, they could not do any Thing amiſs: Becauſe they received the Spirit, and were guided by the Holy Ghoſt; and they were juſtified in the Sight of God, by imputing their evil Doings to Jeſus Chriſt; and his Righteouſneſs to themſelves.

Here, my Lord, was a Doctrine with a Witneſs; a Doctrine only worthy of the Prince of Darkneſs, who was under ſome Apprehenſions, leſt the other ſhould aſſiſt in deſtroying his Power on Earth; and therefore ſpared no Pains to employ his Miſſionaries to oppoſe it. I need not ſay how far he has ſucceeded, it is too well known he had the Majority indeed; the Gentleman gained his Point, and ſtrange Havock he has made amongſt the Souls of the People. He brought them glad Tidings, very glad Tidings. Poor Mortals love Sin better than they do their Souls; and ſo fine an Excuse for gratifying their vicious Inclinations, was joyful Tidings ſure enough, which they readily embraced.

Heretofore, my Lord, wicked Men were cautious of acting evilly, leſt it ſhould gain them the Reproaches of their Neighbours; Now they act openly, without Reſerve: Shame lays no Reſtraint upon them; they
act

act under the immediate Direction of God; they reproach their Neighbours, and denounce Damnation against all who are not of their barbarous Opinion.—Charity, the white-faced Cherubim that waits before the Throne of God, once sat brooding over this Isle with guardian Care; now she is banished from us. All Moral Virtues are cried down, as prejudicial to the Soul by leading People astray. Good Books, are exclaimed against, and discouraged. The Names of Virtue and Reason are almost sufficient to get a Man knocked o' the Head; and every Kind of Villainy is practised openly, under a false Pretence to Piety. And though I think it is impossible that one in a Thousand of these People can believe a single Syllable of this Doctrine themselves; yet it is so fine a Cloak to cover their natural Propensity to Evil, that it is their Interest to support it; insomuch, that even the honest Part of our Clergy are insulted, abused, and told that they preach damnable Doctrine, when they exhort their Congregation to live like Christians. What a shocking Sight, my Lord, must it be to a real Christian, to see a Sermon printed, which had been preached by one of these People, in the Capacity of Chaplain to a public Charity, under the following Title.

ENCOURAGEMENT FOR SINNERS; OR,
 RIGHTEOUSNESS ATTAINABLE WITH-

OUR WORKS. And yet the Gentleman who preached this Sermon, after having been discharged for it, was admitted to a Curacy in one of our principal Churches in the City, which is constantly thronged with his Followers, and defiled with his detestable Doctrine. Nor is this all, my Lord: Too many of our Curates take the same Road, to answer private Ends. They find the Trade to be a beneficial one, and cannot see why they should not have a Right to come in for Snacks, as well as their Neighbours; so that the Religion of our Churches, on which the Happiness of a present, as well as a future State depends, is changed into the Doctrine of D—ls; which I must needs own, I think is a very great Pity; I was going to say, a very great Shame. Here spring up Monopolizing, Forestalling, and every other Act of Cruelty, Injustice, and Oppression. Our Markets are daily loaded with Meat turned to Putrefaction, (a shocking, frightful Sight) not fit for Dogs to eat, and liable only to breed an Infection; and afterwards thrown into the Thames, rather than the Owners of it will suffer it to be sold at a moderate Price to relieve the Distresses of the Poor. The Price they get for Part of it is so extravagantly great, that they can afford to lose the Rest; and where Conscience has no Share, they pay little Regard to the Distresses of their Neigh-

Neighbours. Nor is this Article of Provisions the only Part of our Misfortunes. Every Thing we wear, and every Thing we are obliged to make Use of otherwise, is made so slight, and unfit for Service, that the People are forced to buy double the Quantity they had Occasion for, when they had the Value for their Money; so that their Pockets are drained every Way; whilst the wicked, avaricious Drainers engross the Riches of the Nation to themselves, and wallow in Luxury and Ease, by destroying their Fellow-Creatures. These Gentry of whom I treat, are great Masters of Art and Policy; they never lay out a Shilling themselves, but with one another; for which Reason Numbers turn to their Party, for the Sake of Interest, and the more they bring over, the stronger and richer still they grow.

As these People are all Saints or Apostles, (for so they call themselves) it is evident, my Lord, that there never were any real Saints or Apostles till these made their Appearance on the Stage of Life; by Reason, such as were looked upon to be Saints and Apostles in former Days, held quite different Opinions. They believed that they were created with Free-will, to chuse or Good or Evil; they believed, in Consequence of this, that it was their Duty to do Good to every Thing, and no Harm; and to deal Charity to all who

stood in Need of it, to the utmost of their Power. They did not believe that Holiness of Life consisted in Words only, but in Deeds. They did not believe that our Redeemer came upon the Earth to make them a Present of his Righteousness, and take their Sins upon himself. They believed, that by their own Merits they must stand or fall; that by their own Works they must be tried, acquitted or condemned, before the Tribunal of the Most High. They walked humbly before God. They did not judge evilly, or condemn their Neighbours. They were not avaricious. They lived not in Luxury and Ease. They sought not after Riches; they were meek and lowly, and kept Nothing to themselves, but what was just sufficient to supply their Wants; whereas, the Holiness of our Saints and Apostles, consists in Nothing but Words. They talk much of Holiness and Righteousness; they make a great Fuss about the Name of Jesus Christ, against which they blaspheme every Hour of their Lives, by perverting his Doctrine. They sing Hymns, pretend to expound the Scriptures (the better to enable them to deceive) and this is called living exemplary Lives. The unfortunate Mrs. Brownrigg, was one of these exemplary Saints; and much Pains she took to work out her Salvation: If the greater the Sinner, the more acceptable to God, she took Care her

Portion

Portion of Happiness should be very large ; which, undoubtedly, the Gentleman who attended her at the Gallows was truly sensible of, when he informed the Multitude, that he was as certain of her Salvation as he was of his own Existence. I am not ignorant that God has promised to forgive repentant Sinners ; but it was not in her Power, unhappy Woman ! to repent in a Manner acceptable to God , by Reason her Crime was the Effect of her Disposition, which was naturally hardened, cruel, and inhumane ; and therefore she could not love God sufficiently to be grieved that she had offended him ; for the Spirit of God, which inspires us with that Love, cannot enter into a hardened Heart : Her Repentance proceeded from the Trouble she was in, on Account of the Sufferings she was to undergo, and was therefore no other than an Effect of Self-love. There are four Motives, my Lord, for committing Sin : Avarice ; the love of Pleasure ; a Desire for Revenge ; or, a Desire for supplying our Wants. Now, she had none of these Motives, except the Pleasure she took in Acts of Cruelty. So that it is plain her Soul was hardened, cruel, and inhumane, without the least Spark or Gleam of Virtue of any Kind ; and, consequently, a very unfit Companion for the King of Purity.

Christ

Christ did not come upon Earth, as these People falsely assert, to justify the Ungodly; for the Ungodly cannot be justified. No man can justify a bad Thing. He came to call Sinners to Repentance; that they might turn from their evil Ways and live. He came to teach them good Works; to tell them what they should do to inherit the Kingdom of Heaven. He told them they must love God, and keep his Commandments: That they must love their Maker above all Things; and their Neighbours as themselves: That they must do unto all Men as they would they should do unto them; for this (said he) is the Law and the Prophets.

Now, from the Time Christ came into the World, to the Time he went out of it, he never said or did a Thing that did not tend to promote the true Practice of good Works, and what he had laid down to them in the foregoing Words; it was the whole Tenor of his Doctrine, his Precepts and his Example. He also told them, that the Soul that entered Heaven must be as pure and spotless as the new-born Babe. It is therefore plain and obvious, even to the weakest Capacity, that this Purity could only be attainable by a strict Adherence to his Doctrine; a due Observance in Regard to the good Works, the good Things he had commanded them to
do;

do; not by his Blood's being shed; for had that been the Case, he needed not to have told them what they were to do to inherit the Kingdom of Heaven. That he died for the Sins of the People, is most certain; for had there been no Sin, he had not come upon the Earth, and consequently had not died. That his Death has brought Salvation to the World, is as certain; that is, it has brought Salvation to such as have had Grace enough to love that Truth, which the Son of God held so highly in Esteem as to suffer what he suffered, rather than forsake. It would be well for our Saints and Apostles, would they love and teach that Truth for which the Son of God suffered. He has cautioned us to beware of false Prophets, who come to us in Sheep's Cloathing; and told us we should know them by their Doctrines. Now, to know them by their Doctrines, is to compare their Doctrines with the Doctrine of Jesus Christ; and all Doctrines that disagree with his Doctrine, must be false Doctrines; and the Teachers of them false Prophets: For if there be no Name under Heaven whereby we can be saved, but the Name of Jesus, there can be no Doctrine under Heaven, that can lead us the right Way, but his Doctrine.

There are two Principles, my Lord, whereby we can obtain eternal Felicity, or eternal Misery: The one is, to do all the
 Good

Good we can to every Thing ; and the other, all the Evil, or Harm. God acts by the one Principle, and Satan by the other. Now, if we work with Satan, we are of the same Spirit with Satan, and consequently under his Direction ; he therefore hardens us, and blinds us ; the Holy Ghost cannot enlighten us, or give us any Assistance, because we are not of his Party ; for God and the Devil cannot both Work together : So that whatsoever Light we may imagine we have in us, at this Time, is nothing else but Darkness ; whatsoever Faith may spring forth in our Hearts, or whatsoever Notions we may have of Things eternal and divine, are all false, all erroneous ; because they are the Dictates of Satan ; and he is the Father of Lies ; the Spirit of Error. But if we act upon the same Principle with God, we then work with God ; we become of one Spirit with God, and the Holy Ghost joins us ; he strengthens us, enlightens us, and gives us Wisdom ; he inspires us with a true Knowledge of God and his Ways ; so that we feel them in our Hearts, and as we grow in Grace, by a due Perseverance in Acts of Virtue ; Sin dies, and, we grow in Purity ; till, at length, we become perfect, even as the Angels are perfect ; and then springs forth a true and lively Faith in God, and his beloved Son ; because then we know all Things necessary to Salvation.

tion. It is therefore evident, that good Works produce a true and saving Faith; because they soften and unbend the Mind, and fit it for divine Inspiration; without which we can have no true Faith, or Knowledge of any Thing. All we see is in false Colours; for, the Spirit of God, which inspires us with that Faith, and lights us to that Knowledge, cannot enter into a hardened, sinful Heart. As I said before, God and Satan cannot both work together; we must therefore, first turn our Backs upon Satan, before we can behold, or know our Maker.

Should any Man, who peruses this Epistle, be so great a Stranger to the Workings of the Spirit of God, as to deny the Truth of the foregoing Particulars; for better Confirmation, I refer him to St. Peter, the beloved Apostle of Christ. The Apostle who loved his Master; the Apostle in whose Name Christ laid the Foundation of his Church; and, to whom he gave the Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven. This Apostle could not err; and, in the first Chapter of his second Epistle, may be found the following Words:

3d Verse. "According as his divine Power
 " hath given unto us all Things that pertain
 " unto Life, and Godliness, through the
 " Knowledge of him that hath called us to
 " Glory and Virtue; whereby are given
 C " unto

“ unto us exceeding great and precious Pro-
 “ mises; that by these you might be Par-
 “ takers of the divine Nature; having
 “ escaped the Corruption that is in the
 “ World through Lust; and besides this,
 “ giving all Diligence, add to your Faith
 “ Virtue; and to Virtue Knowledge; and
 “ to Knowledge, Temperance; and to Tem-
 “ perance, Patience; and to Patience, Godli-
 “ ness; and to Godliness, brotherly Kind-
 “ ness; and to brotherly Kindness, Charity;
 “ for if these Things be in you, and abound,
 “ they make you that ye shall neither be
 “ barren, nor unfruitful in the Knowledge
 “ of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that
 “ lacketh these Things is blind, and can-
 “ not see far off, and hath forgotten that
 “ he was purged from his old Sins.”

Now, by being purged from their old Sins,
 the Apostle did not mean (what undoubtedly
 our Apostles would persuade us to believe he
 meant) the Remission of their Sins in Gene-
 ral. For, had there been a Possibility of
 their Sins in general being remitted, whilst
 they were in this State of Barrenness, and
 Blindness; it had not signified one single
 Farthing, whether their Eyes had ever been
 opened, or no. By being purged from their
 old Sins; the Apostle means, the Sins of
 Idolatry, and Unbelief; which were purged
 away by Faith, as soon as they had embraced
 the Christian Religion. But, that Purity of
 Spirit,

Spirit, by which alone we can attain to a true Knowledge of God, and his beloved Son; and inherit the Kingdom of Heaven; he gives us to understand, can only be obtained by Virtue; by the true and unfeigned Practice of good Works.

I have remarked, that amongst all the Traders in Religion, who have endeavoured to deceive the Ignorant, and draw them into Error, since the Days of Christ; I never heard of one, who had founded his Doctrine upon the Doctrine of Christ, or, on that of any one of the Apostles who had walked with him. St. Paul has been so happy as to supply them all. The Truth of the Matter is, there is Nothing in the Doctrine of Christ; or, in that of any one of the Apostles who had walked with him; that can answer any interested, or worldly End; and they are therefore constrained, of Necessity, to lay Hold on some unguarded Words in St. Paul's Epistles, which were wrote before he had arrived at Purity; and which, in Reality, were the Effects of a Mistake he lay under in Regard to his own Conversion. But, as the Apostle comes nearer to Purity, by a Perseverance in Acts of Grace, he grows more enlightened; and then they leave him; they follow him no farther.

Before St. Paul was converted, he was a very great Sinner; he was guilty of Murder,

and every heinous Crime. He had been consenting and abetting to the Stoning of St. Stephen; and had assisted personally in that horrid Act of Cruelty. He had persecuted the inoffensive Followers of Christ, who had never done him the least Injury, even to Death; which is evident by his own Confession. He had made such Havock in the Church, that the greater Part of her best Members were destroyed; and the few that remained were scattered about; not daring to appear, or attempt to preach the Gospel; insomuch, that the Apostles were obliged to fly to strange Countries, to save their Lives; by Means of which, the Church was in great Danger of falling entirely to the Ground; and the Pains, which God and his beloved Son had taken, to endeavour to redeem the World from Satan's Slavery; likely to be rendered of none Effect. Now, the best Method that could possibly be taken, to prevent this dreadful Calamity, and save the little Remnant that remained in Damascus, from sure Destruction; was, to convert this hardened Sinner, in the Midst of his evil Ways. The just Judgement of the Almighty might, indeed, have fallen upon him, and cleaved him to his Mother Earth; but that would not have been of so much Service to the Church, as his being converted; by Reason the all-seeing Eye of Wisdom readily foresaw, that the Testimony of this hardened

Man,

Man, who had proved himself so great an Enemy to Christ, and his Doctrine; would be of much more Weight with the People, than if all the Friends and Followers of the Martyr had been preaching to the longest Day's-End in Eternity. Besides this, the Apostles were grievously cast down, by their ill Success; and their Spirits weakened and depressed by their Sufferings and Afflictions; so that this bold, this resolute, this enterprising Man, was greatly wanting to assist them, and support the Church at this unhappy Juncture. To this End, he was stopped in his Journey to Damascus, whilst pursuing his barbarous Purposes; and, convinced by so strong a Proof from Heaven, that this very Christ whom he so persecuted, was of a Truth the Son of God; that he had Nothing left even to form a Doubt upon. Now, St. Paul's being converted, did not immediately make him righteous, pure, or perfect; he was only convinced. For, no Man can be righteous, pure or perfect, till he is cleansed from his Sin; he must first destroy the Power of Satan, within him, by acting upon the same Principles with God; before he can receive his Grace, or arrive at any Degree of Perfection. And the hardened Sinner will find this a difficult Task to undertake; for Sin, by long Practice, grows into a Habit, and takes Root in the Heart;

so

so that there requires much Time and Trouble to get it out again; and, therefore, at St. Paul's first setting forth, he was only in his Minority of Virtue. he was but an Infant in Understanding; and, consequently, not sufficiently enlightened, to perceive the true Reason why he had been converted; and called in so extraordinary a Manner to the important Office. And, as he knew he had neither willed, nor run; or done any good Thing whatsoever, to merit the divine Favour; he imputed it to the violent Affection, which God, and Jesus Christ had for him, merely as a Sinner; and, therefore, he says, "it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth; but of God, that sheweth Mercy;" and did not in the least doubt, but all heinous Sinners had an equal Right with him, to the same Blessings from Heaven: Nay, it is evident, by the astonishing Pains he seems to take, to vindicate Sin; that, from what had happened to himself, and a Consciousness of his Demerit; he actually imagined, that Sinners were more in Favour with God, than other People; and, provided they only believed as he did, they had nothing more to either hope, or fear; they were immediately justified; and become righteous, pure, and perfect; as he conceited he was himself. From this Mistake of the Apostle sprung forth that dangerous and dreadful

dreadful Doctrine, which he at first endeavoured to persuade the World to believe; that Faith, without good Works, was sufficient to justify a Man, in the Sight of God. And, though it had very little the Appearance of either Truth, or Reason; it was, undoubtedly, well received at that Time, by Numbers, who took Pains to cause it to be propagated; by Reason, it opposed the Doctrine of Christ, which was so very terrible to them, as it aimed at destroying their Lusts. This gave much Offence to such as had walked with Christ; had arrived at Purity; and knew such Doctrines to be erroneous; insomuch, it caused great Disputes, Divisions, and Differences among the People. St. Peter, in one of his own Epistles, particularly warns his Friends, to take Care that they are not led astray, to their Destruction, by St. Paul's Writings; as others had been; and St. James's whole Epistle General, was written to correct his Errors; as may easily be perceived: The Errors which St. Paul himself afterwards acknowledged to be Errors; and renounced as such. Now, St. Paul, who, in Reality, had not the least Inclination to do Harm; and, had only been hurried away by his Zeal, to so great a Degree, that it left him no Time for Reflection; so that, he had often expressed himself too unguardedly; was troubled, that his Writings, or Doctrines
other-

otherwise, had caused any Disputes or Divisions in the Church. He, therefore, for the future, forbears running on with so great a Multiplicity of Words; and, in his second Epistle, which is to the Corinthians; he seems entirely upon his Guard, in every Word; nay, even his very Stile, is quite altered. Here, he tells them, that “ he came
 “ to them in Meekness, in Simplicity; and,
 “ had determined to know no more amongst
 “ them, save Jesus Christ; and, him cruci-
 “ fied.” Now, this is a poor, weak Handle to lay Hold on, as some do; and assert thereby, that knowing no more than Christ crucified, is sufficient to justify a Man in the Sight of God; for, certainly, the Apostle meant no suchh Thing. The greater Part of this Epistle was written to reprimand the Corinthians, for the Disputes and Divisions, which were at that Time amongst them. He says,
 “ every one of you saith, I am of Paul, and I
 “ of Apollos, and I of Cephas, and I of
 “ Christ. Who is Paul? who is Apollos?
 “ &c.” It is plain that these Disputes, and Divisions had crept in amongst them, by Means of his former Doctrine; and that many of the Corinthians, had judged unfavourably of him, on that Account. For, in the 14th Chapter of the same Epistle, he says,
 “ But with me it is a very small Thing
 “ that I should be judged of you, or of
 “ Man’s

“ Man’s Judgment.” Now, for the foregoing Reasons, he is cautious in what he says to them ; and therefore tells them, that he had determin’d to know no more amongst them for the future, save Jesus Christ ; and him crucified.

In St. Peter’s second Epistle, and 3d Chapter, may be seen these Particulars. “ And
 “ account that the Long-suffering of our
 “ Lord is Salvation. Even as our beloved
 “ Brother Paul also, according to the Wisdom
 “ given unto him, hath written unto
 “ you, as also in all his Epistles, speaking in
 “ them of these Things, in which there are
 “ some Things hard to be understood, which
 “ they that are unlearned and unstable wrest,
 “ as they do also the other Scriptures, unto
 “ their own Destruction. Ye, therefore, beloved,
 “ seeing ye know these Things before,
 “ beware, lest ye also being led away with
 “ the Error of the Wicked, fall from your
 “ own Stedfastness.”

It is manifestly apparent, by what St. Peter says here, that People had been led astray, to their Destruction, by St. Paul’s Writings, even before the Apostles died : And we need not take much Pains to find out what Part of his Writings they had been led astray by ; St. Peter expresses it plain enough : There is certainly nothing in his Writings that can give Offence to either God or Man ; except

the foregoing horrid Doctrine, of Faith without good Works, and the Doctrine of Predestination. It was therefore, undoubtedly, these two pernicious Branches that took so deep a Root in the Beginning, That have since produced those admirable Doctrines, of Righteousness attainable without Works, and free Justification by imputed Righteousness—by imputing our Sins to Jesus Christ, and his Righteousness to ourselves. Those admirable Doctrines, I say, which have spread themselves to such a Width, in our Days, throughout his Majesty's Dominions, that Charity, Honesty, and every other Gift of the Holy Ghost are overshadowed by them, and very rarely to be seen.

In the above Epistle of St. Peter, 2d Chap. he says, “ There were false Prophets also
 “ among the People, even as there shall be
 “ false Teachers among you, who privily
 “ shall bring in damnable Heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and
 “ bring unto themselves sure Destruction,
 “ And many shall follow their pernicious
 “ Ways, by Reason of whom the Way of
 “ Truth shall be evil spoken of. And
 “ through Covetousness shall they with
 “ feigned Words, make Merchandize of
 “ you, whose Judgment now of a long
 “ Time lingereth not, and their Damnation
 “ slumbereth not.”

Whether

Whether St. Peter has prophesied truly, or not; and who the above Words may be justly applied to, I will leave the world to judge. He who perverts the Scriptures, and denies the Doctrine of Christ to be of itself necessary to Salvation, denies the Lord of Life: And such as through Covetousness, with feigned Words, lead People astray to their Destruction, make Merchandize of their Souls, and their Damnation, indeed, slumbereth not.

St. Paul's Opinion of Predestination may be easily accounted for. His Manner of being converted was sufficient to make him a Predestinarian; because he was filled with Zeal to so great a Degree that it left no Room for Reflection. However, if he meant any Thing of Predestination, in Reality, he certainly meant no more of it, than what regarded the Church of Christ; though it seems, in several Places, to be rather a Mode of Speech he had accustomed himself to, from being conversant amongst the Gentiles, than any Thing else. We have the same Mode of Speech from them to this Day, and are frequently apt to say, Things are ordained, when at the same Time we don't believe a Word about Predestination. St. Paul said many Things that he neither did, nor could mean; and therefore such as have not Understanding sufficient to enable them to find out his true Meaning, should meddle with no more

of his Writings than what they find directly agreeable with the Doctrine of Jesus Christ. He tells the Hebrews, that " every Man " that useth Milk, is unskilful in the Word " of Righteousness, for he is only a Babe." And yet I dare venture to say, that no human Being ever took it into his Head to believe that the Use of Milk could make any Man a Babe, or unskilful in the Word of Righteousness; for, had that been the Case, the Elders. of the Church would certainly have forbid the Use of the most valuable Part of our Nourishment. He charges the Corinthians to deliver a Man, who had committed a Fault, unto Satan; and he gives Timothy to understand, that he hath delivered Hymeneus and Alexander unto Satan. Now, I am fully satisfied, St. Paul never was so weak as to imagine he had the Power to deliver any Man unto Satan. The Son of God had no such Power, neither did he assume it. He came to hinder People from going to Satan; not to send them to him. By delivering them unto Satan, the Apostle meant the putting them out of the Community; having no more to say to them, no more to do with them, taking no more Pains or Trouble about them, but delivering them up to their own headstrong Wills; to their wicked Lusts; in short, to the Power of Satan, to deal with them as he thought proper.

proper. And yet on these unguarded Words, a certain Mother-Church builds her indisputable Power of judging, condemning, and sending whomsoever she pleaseth to eternal Damnation; a Thing which never entered into the Apostle's Thoughts. He was not as explicit, in many Particulars, as he might have been, had he known his Meanings would have been wrested, and his Words made a wrong Use of. St. Peter seems to apologize for this Deficiency, where he tells the People not to think it strange concerning the fiery Trial; for undoubtedly he could not help believing that People would think it strange; and very well they might. Nevertheless his Meaning may be perceived, though not by every Person who reads his Writings. That he was not as yet perfect, when he wrote those dreadful Mistakes, which are only to be found in his Epistle to the Romans, take his own Word for it:

Seventh Chap. of Romans, Verses 7, 8, &c.
 " Nay, I had not known Sin, but by the
 " Law; for I had not known Lust, except
 " the Law had said, thou shalt not covet.
 " But Sin taking Occasion by the Command-
 " ment, wrought in me all Manner of Con-
 " cupiscence: For without the Law Sin was
 " dead. For I was alive without the Law
 " once: But when the Commandment
 " came, Sin revived, and I died; and the
 " Com-

" Commandment which was ordained to
 " Life, I found to be unto Death. For Sin
 " taking Occasion by the Commandment,
 " deceived me, and by it slew me. Where-
 " fore the Law is holy; and the Command-
 " ment holy, and just, and good: Was
 " then that which is good, made Death un-
 " to me? God forbid! But Sin, that it
 " might appear Sin, working Death in me
 " by that which is good; that Sin by the
 " Commandment might become exceeding
 " sinful. For we know that the Law is
 " spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under Sin.
 " For that which I do, I allow not; for
 " what I would, that do I not; but what I
 " hate, that I do. If then I do that which
 " I would not, I consent unto the Law, that
 " it is good. Now, then, it is no more I
 " that do it, but Sin that dwelleth in me.
 " For I know that in me (that is, in my
 " Flesh) dwelleth no good Thing. For to
 " will is present with me. But how to per-
 " form that which is good, I find not. For
 " the Good that I would, I do not. But the
 " Evil which I would not, that I do. Now,
 " if I do that I would not, it is no more I
 " that do it, but Sin that dwelleth in me.
 " I find, then, a Law, that when I would do
 " Good, Evil is present with me. For I de-
 " light in the Law of God, after the in-
 " ward Man. But I see another Law in
 " my

“ my Members, warring against the Law of
 “ my Mind, and bringing me into Captivity
 “ to the Law of Sin, which is in my Mem-
 “ bers. Wretched Man that I am, who
 “ shall deliver me from the Body of this
 “ Death? I thank God, through Jesus
 “ Christ, our Lord. So, then, with the
 “ Mind, I myself serve the Law of God;
 “ but with the Flesh, the Law of Sin.”

I think St. Paul has said sufficient to convince the World, that he was no perfect Man at this Time; but a poor, imperfect Mortal, struggling with Sin, which he had not the Power to conquer. For there is no Creature upon the Face of the Earth, but may avoid committing Sin, if he pleases. All Sins are born of the Mind; it is the Thought that begets them, and the Will that sets them to Work. If People would set a Guard upon their Thoughts and Inclinations, think continually on good Things, and thereby hinder Sin from entering into them, they would not have the Will to commit it. And, without the Will, no Man can commit a Sin, as there are no Laws which oblige People to sin. Therefore St. James, who never said a wrong Thing, says, “ Resist the Devil, and he will fly from
 “ you.” Now, it is plain that St. Paul, at this Time, had not Strength sufficient in his Spirit, to enable him to resist the Temptations of Satan, in a proper Manner; because
 he

he did not fly from him. On the contrary, he vindicates Sin in a most shocking and unthinking Manner. “ Now, if I do that “ I would not (he says) it is no more I that “ do it, but Sin that dwelleth in me.” This is a poor Excuse, a weak Evasion; for certainly, if he had not had the Inclination to Sin, and the Will to commit it, Sin had not been in him.

In his next Epistle, which is his first to the Corinthians, you will find a very different Sort of Language. You will find there, that he has conquered Sin; that he has no longer any carnal Desires, Sins, or Lusts of the Flesh. He is now able to command himself; he has arrived at Purity, and is enlightened; he is become a new Man; and indeed, any Person who Peruses his Epistles from first to last, may readily perceive how he grows in Purity and perfection, by his growing more and more enlightened, and his Doctrine’s coming still nearer and nearer to the Doctrine of Jesus Christ. 1 Cor. Ch. ix. Ver. 26. he says, “ I therefore run not as uncertainly; so “ fight I, not as one that beateh the Air; “ but I keep under my Body, and bring it “ to Subjection; lest that by any Means, “ when I have preached to others, I myself “ should be a Cast-a-way.”

Now observe carefully what he has laid before you immediately after, and you will find

find that he is come to the Goal, and truly worthy of giving Instructions agreeable to his Master's Will. 1 Cor. Ch. xxii, and xiii.

“ But covet earnestly the best Gifts; and
 “ yet shew I unto you a more excellent Way.
 “ Though I speak with the Tongues of
 “ Men, and of Angels, and have not Charity,
 “ I am become as sounding Brass, or as
 “ a tinkling Cymbal. And though I have
 “ the Gift of Prophecy, and understand all
 “ Mysteries, and all Knowledge: And
 “ though I have all Faith, so that I could
 “ remove Mountains, and have no Charity,
 “ I am Nothing. And though I bestow all
 “ my Goods to feed the Poor, and though
 “ I give my Body to be burned, and have not
 “ Charity, it profiteth me Nothing. Charity
 “ suffereth long, and is kind; Charity
 “ envieth not; Charity vaunteth not itself,
 “ is not puffed up, doth not behave itself un-
 “ seemingly, seeketh not her own, is not
 “ easily provoked, thinketh no Evil, re-
 “ joiceth not in Iniquity, but rejoiceth in
 “ the Truth. Beareth all Things, believeth
 “ all Things, hopeth all Things, endureth
 “ all Things. Charity never faileth, but
 “ whether there be Prophecies, they shall
 “ fail; whether there be Tongues, they shall
 “ cease, whether there be Knowledge, it
 “ shall vanish away. For we know in part,

“ and we prophesy in Part; but when that
 “ which is perfect is come, then that which
 “ is in Part shall be done away. When I
 “ was a Child, I spoke as a Child; I un-
 “ derstood as a Child, I thought as a Child;
 “ but when I became a Man, I put away
 “ childish Things; for now we see through
 “ a Glass darkly; but then Face to Face.
 “ Now I know in Part, but then shall I
 “ know even also as I am known. And now
 “ abideth Faith, Hope, Charity, these three;
 “ but the greatest of all is Charity.”

Now here the Apostle makes a Distinction
 between Faith and Charity; and let the in-
 terested Elect of these Days, put whatsoever
 Construction they will upon the Word Cha-
 rity, they must acknowledge, at the same
 Time, that it is Something else besides Faith.
 And, to suppose it (as they construe it to the
 Ignorant) to be that Love, or any other Thing
 we owe to God, or Jesus Christ, were Blas-
 phemy. For Charity is a Thing that de-
 scends to Something below us, in Regard to
 either spiritual or temporal Affairs. It de-
 scends from God to us; but to go from us
 to God, is placing ourselves above him. The
 Apostle's Meaning needs no Explanation.
 By the Word Charity he means what I be-
 lieve is meant by every rational Being, who
 makes Use of it. He means that Tenderness
 of

of Heart, that Humanity of Disposition, that obliges us to feel for the Sufferings and Afflictions of our Fellow-Creatures, and excites in us a sincere Desire of serving, comforting, and assisting them in all their Calamities and Distresses. That will oblige us, though we bear Sufferings ourselves, to administer to the Wants or Sufferings of others. That will not suffer us to envy any Man's Happiness; but will oblige us to endeavour to promote the Happiness of all. That never makes us vaunt, or lord it over our own Species, but places us upon an Equality with all good Men. That never tempts us to think evilly of our Neighbours, or to judge unfavourably without a Cause. In fine, he means that Purity of Spirit which leads us to act upon the same Principle with God, and do Good to every Thing, to the utmost of our Power, and no Harm; without which, though we may have Faith and Knowledge, and though we give our Goods to feed the Poor, and our Bodies to be burned, it will avail us Nothing, sure enough. There are many who have what some call Faith, and Knowledge, and yet have neither Humanity nor any other Virtue. There are also many who give their Goods to feed the Poor through Ostentation, or to answer some worldly End; and yet have not this tender Feeling, this Humanity of

Disposition, this Sincerity of Heart, which springs from Purity of Spirit. And there have been many who have given their Bodies to be burned, through a blind, misguided Zeal, and, at the same Time, have been entire Strangers to that Tenderness of Heart, that Humanity of Disposition, that Love of one another, that Purity of Spirit, which the Apostle seems now to be growing pretty well acquainted with, and which is very foreign from the Doctrine of Faith without good Works being sufficient to justify a Man in the Sight of God. But the Saints of these Days seldom quote this Part of the Apostle's Writings, and when they do, they take Care to put such Meanings to it, as may render it of a Piece with the Rest of their Doctrine, though the true one may be easily perceived.

After St. Paul has given us this excellent commendatory Harangue in Favour of good Works, and tells us that, without them, all we can do will avail us Nothing, he gives us to understand also, that, till now, he was himself a Stranger to their true Value; that whatsoever he had said, or wrote heretofore was only weak and childish, and consequently erroneous; because he had not arrived at a proper State of Perfection, and therefore his Knowledge was weak; he had not Light sufficient to enable him to see the Truth. "When
" I was

“ I was a Child (he says) I spoke as a
 “ Child, I understood as a Child, I thought
 “ as a Child ; but when I became a Man,
 “ I put away childish Things ; for now we
 “ see through a Glass darkly ; but then Face
 “ to Face. Now I know in Part, but then
 “ shall I know even also as I am known.
 “ And now abideth Faith, Hope, Char-
 “ ty, these three ; but the greatest of all is
 “ Charity.”

I hope Nobody can be so ignorant as to
 suppose that the Apostle means here his In-
 fancy, his real Childhood ; for we all know
 that Children speak as Children, understand
 as Children, and think as Children. This
 would have had no Connection with what he
 was writing about, and must have been very
 ridiculously introduced. No ; he means his
 Minority in Virtue, his Childhood in Under-
 standing ; at which Time his Ideas were weak
 and imperfect ; so that he spoke childishly,
 foolishly and erroneously ; understood child-
 ishly, foolishly and erroneously, and thought
 childishly, foolishly and erroneously ; because
 he was in the dark. But now he is arrived
 at a perfect State of Manhood in Understand-
 ing, he sees clearly, and childish, foolish,
 erroneous Things are put away. Now he
 knows, even also as he is known. “ And
 “ now abideth Faith, Hope, Charity, these
 “ three ;

“ three ; but the greatest of all is Charity.” And now abides, or remains, the Sum of all true Knowledge, necessary to Salvation ; to believe in God, and Jesus Christ ; to place our Hope and Trust in them ; and to practise good Works ; but the greatest of all these Virtues (he says) is the Practice of good Works. I think St. Paul has here very frankly, and very plainly, acknowledged and renounced his former Errors or Mistakes. However, for better Confirmation, let us see what he says in his Epistle to the Galatians, Chap. iv. Ver. 11, &c. “ I am afraid of you, “ lest I have bestowed upon you Labour in “ vain.” Ver. 13, &c. “ Ye know how “ through Infirmary of the Flesh, I preached “ the Gospel unto you at the first ; and my “ Temptation which was in my Flesh, ye “ despised not, nor rejected, but received “ me as an Angel of God, even as Christ “ Jesus. Where is then the Blessedness you “ spake of ? for I bear you Record, that, if it “ had been possible, ye would have plucked “ out your own Eyes and have given them “ to me. Am I therefore become your Enemy “ because I tell you the Truth ?”

Now, I should be glad to know what this Gospel was, that he had preached to them at the first, through Infirmary of the Flesh, and when his Temptation was in his Flesh, which they

they despised not, nor rejected ; and for which they had received him so very lovingly. He never preached or taught any Doctrine that had the least Appearance of Infirmary of the Flesh, or Temptation in it, except the unhappy Mistakes in his first Epistle, already treated of ; and by which he had persuaded them to believe they might serve God with their Spirits, and the Devil with their Bodies, which was not only a Temptation of the Flesh, and of Satan, but also an absurd Impossibility ; for no Man can serve God and Mammon at the same Time ; all Sins being Works of the Spirit, and set in Action by the Will, however, they might believe that Christ was to be answerable for their Sins, and that was Service sufficient to insure Justification. Then no Wonder, indeed, that he was well received who told it, and his Doctrine accounted for Blessedness ; no Wonder if they beheld him as an Angel of God, or even as Christ Jesus ; just as we behold our famous Apostles here, who teach the like Absurdities. Nay, if it had been possible, they would have plucked out their own Eyes and have given them to him. Who doubts it ? We see astonishing Instances of Things of the same Nature every Day. At the Time St. Paul mentions the above Particulars, he is writing to the Galatians, against Circumcision ; but that was not the Doctrine he meant, with
which

which they had been so highly delighted heretofore; for, certainly, he had never preached Circumcision to them, or to any Body else. It is therefore evident, that it was the unhappy Mistakes already mentioned, which are only to be found in his Epistle to the Romans, and which he had afterwards found to be Mistakes, and Temptations of the Flesh, and had therefore acknowledged, renounced, and put entirely away.

After St. Paul became enlightened, and had put away his childish and unthinking Errors, no Man that ever lived upon the Earth could, or did say more in Favour of good Works. To sum up all Particulars would be tiresome and needless; the following may suffice, with what we have already placed before us in the foregoing Sheets.

Galatians, Chap. vi. Ver. 14. "For all the Law is fulfilled in one Word, even in this, Thou shalt love thy Neighbour as thyself." Ver. 10. "And as we have therefore Opportunity, let us do Good unto all Men, especially unto them who are of the Household of Faith."

Colossians, Ch. iii. Ver. 14. "And above all Things put on Charity, which is the Bond of Perfectness." Ephesians, Chap. iv. Ver. 22. "That ye put off, concerning the former Conversation, the old Man, which

“ which is corrupt according to the deceit-
 “ ful Lusts, and be renewed in the Spirit
 “ of your Mind.” And, Chap. v. Ver. 5.
 “ For that ye know that no Whoremonger,
 “ nor unclean Person, nor covetous Man
 “ who is an Idolater, hath any Inheritance
 “ in the Kingdom of Christ, and of God.”
 Hebrews, Chap. x. Ver. 26. “ For if we
 “ sin wilfully, after we have received the
 “ Knowledge of the Truth, there remaineth
 “ no more Sacrifice for Sins, but a certain
 “ fearful looking for of Judgment, and fiery
 “ Indignation, which shall devour the Ad-
 “ versaries.” And, Ch. xii. Ver. 14. “ Fol-
 “ low Peace with all Men, and Holiness,
 “ without which no Man shall see the Lord.”
 He also desires the Hebrews, “ not to be
 “ unmindful to entertain Strangers, for by
 “ so doing (says he) some have entertained
 “ Angels unawares.”

Now, if I tell a Man one Thing, one Mo-
 ment, and the Contrary the next, I must be
 a Liar, and the Truth is not in me. Nay, I
 must be a Wretch not fit to be relied upon on
 any Occasion. And therefore such as take
 upon them to suppose, that after St. Paul be-
 comes perfectly enlightened, he tells us, that
 without good Works we can never see God,
 nor have any Inheritance in his Kingdom;

and in the same Breath tells us, they will avail us Nothing, pay him a shocking Compliment, and, instead of that Regard due to their adored Director, they endeavour to degrade and debase him, in a most scandalous and shameful Manner. As for my Part, I do not pretend to idolize St. Paul, or his Writings, more than any other; and yet I am so truly sensible of his Meaning, in every Respect, I would venture to give my Oath, that from the Beginning of his first Epistle to the Corinthians, to the last Word in Hebrews, he neither wrote or meant a Thing that tended in the least to discountenance, or discourage the Practice of good Works; but every Thing to the Contrary. And whatsoever he seems to mention, concerning the Invalidity of Works, regards no other than the Works, or Deeds of the Mosaic Law; the Works in which the Jews put their Trust, and on which they had placed their Hopes of Salvation.

The Doctrine of Christ had abolished all those superstitions and superfluous Ceremonies, and therefore it was the Apostle's Duty to write against them; and let the People know, that it was not by them they were to be saved, but by Faith in Jesus Christ, and his Doctrine; by which the Seeds of Grace
are

are planted in our Hearts, to bring forth Fruits unto Righteousness; and these Fruits are Virtues; the righteous Works of the Spirit, or what are commonly called good Works.

It were needless to observe what St. John says in Favour of good Works; all his Epistles tend to nothing else but to excite a Desire in People to love and assist one another. I shall therefore pass him by, and take a little Notice of St. James, on the Occasion: James, the favoured Servant of his Master. So highly favoured, and so near in his Affections, that St. Paul calls him the Lord's Brother.

James, Chap. ii. Ver. 17, &c. " Even so
 " Faith, if it hath not Works, is dead, being
 " alone. Yea, a Man may say, thou hast
 " Faith, and I have Works; shew me thy
 " Faith without thy Works, and I will shew
 " thee my Faith by my Works. Thou
 " believest that there is one God; thou doest
 " well: The Devils also believe, and tremble.
 " But wilt thou know, O vain Man! that
 " Faith without Works is dead? Was not
 " Abraham, our Father, justified by Works,
 " when he had offered Isaac, his Son, upon
 " the Altar? Seest thou how Faith wrought
 " with his Works, and by Works was Faith

“ made perfect. And the Scripture was fulfilled, which saith, Abraham believed God,
 “ and it was imputed unto him for Righteousness, and he was called the Friend of God. Ye see then how that by Works a
 “ Man is justified, and not by Faith only. Likewise, also, was not Rahab the Harlot
 “ justified by Works, when she had received the Messengers, and had sent them out
 “ another Way. For as the Body without the Spirit is dead, so Faith without Works
 “ is dead also.”

Now let us turn our Eyes, for a few Moments, towards the Old Testament, and perceive what the Prophet Isaiah has laid before us. Isaiah, Chap. xxviii. Ver. 6, &c.

“ Is not this the Fast that I have chosen? to
 “ loose the Bonds of Wickedness, to undo
 “ the heavy Burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every Yoke?
 “ Is it not to deal thy bread to the Hungry;
 “ and that thou bring the Poor, that are cast out, to thy House? When thou seest the
 “ Naked, that thou cover him, and that thou
 “ hide not thyself from thine own Flesh;
 “ then shall thy Light break forth as the
 “ Morning, and thy Health shall spring forth speedily; and thy Righteousness shall go
 “ before thee, the Glory of the Lord shall
 “ be

“ be thy Reward. Then shalt thou call,
 “ and the Lord shall answer; thou shalt cry,
 “ and he shall say, Here I am: If thou take
 “ away from the Midst of the Yoke, the
 “ putting forth of the Finger, and speaking
 “ Vanity. And if thou draw out thy Soul
 “ to the Hungry, and satisfy the afflicted
 “ Soul, then shall thy Light rise in Obscu-
 “ rity; and thy Darknes be as the Noon-
 “ Day: And the Lord shall guide thee con-
 “ tinually, and satisfy thy Soul in Drought;
 “ and make fat thy Bones; and thou
 “ shalt be like a watered Garden, and like
 “ a Spring of Waters, whose Waters fail
 “ not.”

Here are Promises to Good Works! even
 Health, Strength, and consequently long Life.
 Here is, indeed, the true Spirit of God, and
 Jesus Christ; and sure and certain Proofs of
 divine Inspiration. And yet I do not remem-
 ber that I have ever heard a Sermon preached
 on these Words; neither did I ever hear of
 any new Sect, or Religion, the Doctrines of
 which had been founded upon them. The
 Truth of it is, they come too near the Al-
 mighty Power, and his Son, to answer any
 interested, or worldly End; and such as have
 interested, or worldly Ends to answer, must
 lay hold on something that will draw the Peo-
 ple

ple after them. Now there cannot be a finer Bait to catch the Ignorant with, than that of persuading them to believe they may go to Heaven, without destroying their Lusts, taking any Trouble, or parting with the Goods of this World, which are so very dear to them.

A violent Fuss about the Name of Jesus, and a great Shew of Sanctity, like sounding Brass, or a tinkling Cymbal (as the Apostle expresses it) empty sound, Words without Deeds, are all they have to trouble their Heads about, in this Life; but when they shall come, at the last Day, to seek a Reward for their famous Doings; they will be answered in the Words of the Lord, by the Gospel according to Matthew, Chap. vii. Ver. 23. "Then will I profess unto them, "I never knew you: Depart from me ye "that work Iniquity."

God has distinguished us from the Beasts of the Field, by making us rational Beings, and therefore he who will not be guided by Reason, makes himself a Brute. Now, such as adhere to the foregoing dreadful Errors, will not so much as hear Reason; they disclaim it; and fly in the Face of every Body, who even mentions the word Reason; they have so strong a Conviction, so convincing a

Proof

Proof of the Verity, the Validity of their Doctrine, and which has so strange an Effect on the Minds of ignorant People, that they hold in the highest Contempt all who would oppose it. This Proof is a Receiving, or Working of the Spirit: The Spirit that is not, and never existed. This Spirit is a certain Calm, Quiet, or Peace of Mind, which all People upon the Face of the Earth enjoy, at one Time or other, when they imagine they have done a Thing that is right; and more especially in Matters of Faith, where their future Welfare is concerned. This Spirit is a Spirit of our own creating; and so very fickle and inconstant, that it change Sides as often as we change our Opinions; it waits upon the Jew as well as the Christian, and will as readily attend the Infidel as either.

Marcus Brutus was possessed of this Spirit, when he murdered Cæsar, his best Friend. He had that certain Calm, that Peace of Mind, because he conceived he had done a meritorious Feat, and therefore imagined himself under the Protection of the Gods. But, when he finds himself mistaken, and apprehends that he has Reason to believe he is abandoned by Fortune, he complains, and accuses the Gods of paying no Regard to Virtue.

The

The most wicked, approbrious, and abandoned Sinners have this Spirit, as well as the Good and the Upright; provided they imagine that what they do is to answer any good End: And though the divine Hand of Justice never ceases to pursue them, in some Shape or other, they are ignorant of the Cause, till it is too late, and then they find their Spirit has deceived them.

I do not pretend to assert, that the Spirit of God does not work in the Hearts of his Servants, for that would be false Doctrine; but he is not a Spirit of our own making; the fickle Spirit that waits upon Opinion; he is the Spirit of Truth; the Spirit that never varies; that is always the same. He is not one Day with Apollos, and another Day with Paul: You will not find him in Wh—d's Tabernacle, and in W——y's Meeting-House, at the same Times. He is the Spirit that Strengthens and enlightens us; and without his Assistance, what we do is but very imperfect, sure enough. Whatsoever Movement may be in our Minds in Favour of a good Act, whilst he is not of our Party, is generally quashed, and overcome by the predominant Evil in our Dispositions. However, certain it is, if we do not seek for him in a proper Manner, and endeavour to do all the Good

we

we can, to the utmost of our Power; we shall never find him; and consequently he will never enlighten us, or give us any Assistance. But turn to him, and he will meet you Half-Way.

I shall conclude my Quotations from Scripture, with a Prophecy of St. Paul's, truly worthy of Observation. Second Epistle to Timothy, Chap. iii. Ver. 1. " This know
 " also, that in the last Days perilous Times
 " shall come: For Men shall be lovers of their
 " own selves, covetous, Boasters, proud, Blasphemers, disobedient to Parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural Affections,
 " Truce-breakers, false Accusers, incontinent, fierce, Despisers of those that are good. Traitors, heady, high-minded, Lovers of Pleasure, more than Lovers of God;
 " having a Form of Godliness, but denying the Power thereof. From such turn away;
 " for of this Sort are they which creep into Houses, and lead captive silly Women, laden with Sins, led away with divers Lusts, ever learning, and never able to come to the Knowledge of the Truth."

I think, my Lord, no Man can deny that the Apostle had the true Spirit of Prophecy. The perilous Times are certainly come; at

least to us. And, as I do not apprehend that the whole Fabric of this Earth will be totally destroyed, at one and the same Time, it was, undoubtedly, in us the Prophecy was meant to be fulfilled. There is Matter in it, my Lord, of so remarkable a Nature, that it claims not only our Attention, in the greatest Degree, but also our Admiration.

The Apostle tells us, that in the last Days perilous Times shall come; and he gives us a short Account of those Perils. Now, he says Nothing concerning Murders, Rapes, Adulteries, and many other heinous Crimes, which were the Crimes of all Ages; he only mentions some few of a peculiar Nature, which heretofore had not abounded; and, by which, as sure and certain Signs and Tokens, we may be given to understand, that the latest Days are come, when Judgment shall no longer stay.

England, my Lord, has been, for some Ages past, a very wicked Nation; yet her Vices were tinged with Virtue. Tenderness, and generous Humanity, the darling Attributes of God, were never absent from her, in the midst of her Excesses. These were Standards, my Lord, whereby her Natives were known in all Countries, and her Fame pro-

proclaimed throughout the Christian World. By these she was protected, even in Clouds of Vice. For the Sake of these, her Failings were looked over, her Sins were blotted out, and her Iniquities were remembered no more. For these, she throve and flourished in Indolence and Ease. For these, Success crowned all her Undertakings; her Enemies were made her Footstools; and happy Plenty waited on the Feasts of even her most indigent Sons. Now, she has banished her guardian Angels, and the Blessings are also gone. Now, she lies open to the Power of Satan, whose Delight it is to destroy: He therefore blinds her, so that she walks in Ignorance. Her Light, is changed to Darkness; her Happiness, to Misery; her Liberty, to Slavery; and her Glory, to Confusion.

The People, now, my Lord, are become hardened, cruel, and inhumane; without natural Affections; loving Nothing but themselves, and seeking to destroy one another. Covetous, avaricious, overbearing; complaining of Oppression, and yet the greatest Oppressors. Boasters, opiniated, conceited, and proud of what their Vices will not suffer them to live to enjoy. Unholy, unthankful, ungrateful; never satisfying, and never satisfied with

any Thing. Children disobedient to Parents, and Parents taking Pains to destroy the Souls of their Children. Incontinent, fierce (the Effects of Inhumanity) giving Offence where they are not offended, and dealing Evil where they have received Good. Despisers of the Good and Just ; and Lovers of Pleasure, more than Lovers of God: Truce, or Promise-breakers. False Accusers ; seeking to take away the Lives, or Livelihoods of their Fellow-creatures, by Scandal and Detraction, without any rational Excitement thereto ; and if they cannot rob them of their Lives, or Livelihoods, they will rob them of their Peace. Blasphemers, Traitors ; heady, high-minded ; grasping at Power, which they know not how to wield ; having a Form of Godliness, though denying the Power of God ; and creeping into Houses to deceive ignorant People, who are ever learning, and never able to come to the Knowledge of the Truth.

Lisbon, my Lord, suffered for her Cruelty. Sodom, and Gomorrah, were destroyed for beastly, and unnatural Affections. Egypt was visited for Luxury, and Infidelity ; and I have great Reason to believe that England will be visited for the above Crimes of her own, and all the others along with them ; for she is now exempt from none.

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It has always been observable, my Lord, that when a People have arrived to the utmost Pitch of Wickedness that they could possibly arrive at; they have then received the fatal Blow, because then they are no longer sufferable in the Sight of God.

I do not pretend to prophesy, my Lord, but I am a rational Being; I believe in God, and in Jesus Christ; I partly know their Ways; I can expound the Scriptures as well as any modern Apostle of them all; and I will venture to say, that, unless some very effectual Method is taken, to reduce the People of England to their former State, they will be visited with Pestilence, Famine, or some other dreadful, and unavoidable Calamity, whereby to cut them off, and that very speedily too. By reason they cannot arrive at a higher Pitch of Wickedness than they are at, at present; so that the Wrath is kindled, and the Sword unsheathed.

Now this, my Lord, must be the Clergy's Care. It therefore behoves them to set about it, without the least Delay, and use their utmost Endeavours to retrieve the People, before it is too late, by public Prayers, and Admonitions, as well as private Solicitations; laying before them the Nature of their State,
and

and their Offences. Let them call home Christianity, my Lord, * which was turned out of his Majesty's Dominions about eighteen Years ago; and, in all Probability, their guardian Angels, Tenderness and Humanity, will return also; for I observed, my Lord, that after she was gone, the others soon followed; they being ever inseparable. Let them admonish Parents, and Governors of Families, to deter their Children, or such as are under their Care, from Acts of Cruelty, and giving Offence, which are the first Things they are now indulged in; from whence springs forth Hardness of Heart; and from Hardness of Heart, every other Evil that tends to sure Destruction, both here, and hereafter. Let them endeavour to prevail upon the People in general to love one another, and not oblige their Fellow-Creatures to be terrified at the Sight of one of their own Species. To practise good Works, and to be honest, charitable, generous, and humane; and then they will thrive. Their latter End will be better than their Beginning. Whereas, the Wicked prosper only for a Time. Their Sun goes down in sorrow, and Affliction, Misery, and Pain, and often in grievous Want,

* Alteration of Eves, and Festivals.

and sore Distress. To love, and honour their royal Sovereign, and never wish for Nero to Rule over them, who caused the Murders of his Mother, and his Tutor, and laughed to see his Country set on Fire. Let all pernicious Doctrines be suppressed, and driven out from amongst the People, not only in this Metropolis, but in every other Part of our Constitution. I mean, such Doctrines as tend to promote Cruelty, Hardness of Heart. Such Doctrines as tend to banish Humanity, Charity, and natural Affections of every Kind, by persuading People to believe that good Works are not necessary to Salvation, and thereby laying the blackest Odiums, and most scandalous Imputations upon the justice of God, and his adorable Son. Let such as chuse to teach, teach the Doctrine of Jesus Christ, and no Matter who they are, or where they teach it.

I am sorry to say, my Lord, that too many of this Nation do not believe that there is a God, or Jesus Christ, no, not even a future State. And such as do believe, and willingly would save their Souls, encourage and run after false Teachers, who lead them to Perdition, because their own will not take proper Pains to instruct them, and set them in the right Road.

That

There is a Way, my Lord, to obtain Salvation, than which, nothing is more Easy; for God's Yoke is Easy, and his Burden light. He is Good, and Just, and when he created Man, he did not create him to destroy him, by making the Means whereby he was to obtain Salvation a Matter of Difficulty, Hardship, Pain, or Trouble, he created him to be happy; and therefore he made the Means whereby he was to obtain Salvation, the most easy Thing in Nature; far from being attended with Hardship, Difficulty, Pain, or Trouble; for as I said before, his Yoke is Easy, and his Burden light. Instead of Thorns, and Bryars, (as the Ignorant imagine) he has strewn Roses in the Way. He has made the Path delightful, sweet, desirable, and pleasing to the Mind, purposely that we may chuse it before that which leads to Death. And this will come against unhappy Sinners, at Judgment. It shall then be proved that they have fled from Pleasure, Peace, and Comfort, to embrace Hardship, Trouble, and Affliction; as though they would say, they would rather endure any Thing, than obey the Will of God, and live with him hereafter, so that, of Necessity, they

they must acknowledge the Justice of their Sentence; which they could not do, if God had made the Means of their Salvation a Matter of Difficulty; for then they would have some Excuse to plead for their Disobedience, whereas, now they can have none.

They must love God above all Things, my Lord; for in this the Sum of every Thing is comprised. And they must give Proofs that they love God above all Things; and these very Proofs that they are to give, will possess them of the Love of God, and make them pure and spotless as the new-born Babe. And these are only to be found in the Practice of Virtue; which so far from being painful, troublesome, or disagreeable to either Body, or Mind, is so extremely pleasing, and delightful, it is amazing to me, how any Creature breathing can ever practise the contrary. I will ask the most hardened Wretch that lives, these Questions: — Which of the two, feels the greater Satisfaction, the more pleasing heart-felt Joy, he who commits a Murder, or he who saves his Neighbour's Life? He who robs, or wrongs an honest Man of his Substance, or he who saves an honest Man from being wronged, and causes his Right to be restored to him? I dare ven-

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ture to say, it will be given to the latter, in both Cases.

It therefore behoves them, my Lord, if they pay the least Regard to the Welfare of their Souls, to set themselves apart immediately, to practise Virtue: For every Virtue is an Attribute of God, and the Spirit of God, which presides over each Virtue, will strengthen and assist them in the Practice, so that they will grow fond of it; It will be pleasing to them. They will take Delight in it: The opposite Evil they will banish entirely from them. It will be dead to them: They will perceive its Deformity; they will therefore hate it; they will detest it, and never think of it again, but with abhorrence. — And the higher they rise in the Practice of Virtue, the more they will be freed from Sin; for every Virtue will banish its opposite Vice. Virtue and the Love of it, will by this Means become habitual, and Vice entirely extinct; for Opposites cannot both work together; one or the other must be defeated.

Now, the more they are freed from Sin, the nearer they will come to Purity: The nearer they come to Purity, the nearer they will come to God in Perfection; and the nearer

nearer they come to God in Perfection, the more they will be enlightened, strengthened, and impowered; 'till at length they will attain to a true Knowledge of God, and his Ways; and when they once know them, they cannot help loving them above all Things. They are so truly adorable, so heavenly charming, they possess the Soul with angelic Rapture. Their Thoughts, their Attention, will be entirely taken up in enumerating their admirable Beauties, their wonderful Perfections; they will Think of nothing else, they will study nothing else, and they will Love nothing else. They will love Virtue, because it bears the Likeness of God; and they will love God, because he is the Author of Virtue. — They will be elevated, raised above the Fopperies, the Vanities and Vices of this World; they will look down upon them with Contempt; they will despise their Meanness; they will be ashamed, they will be astonished to think they ever could have been so ignorant as to pay the least Regard to them; and they will sincerely pray to God for Pardon. — The old Man will be then put off, in earnest; Corruption, will have put on Incorruption; Mortality, Immortality. They will be regenerated in Virtue, pure,

and spotless as the new-born Babe, and joined with the happy Family of God; and then conscious Virtue, will be the true unerring Spirit that will assure them their former Sins shall be remitted.

That the Divine Spirit of Grace, and your Lordship's faithful Endeavours, may effect a happy Reconciliation between these falling People, and their offended God, is, my Lord, the sincere Desire of,

Your Lordship's dutiful,

Most obedient, and

Most humble Servant,



PRUDENTIA CHRISTIANA.